

# Council

## SPECIAL MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held in the Council Chamber, City Hall  
on Friday, 13th February, 2026 at 6.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

Members present: The Lord Mayor, Councillor Kelly (Chairperson);  
The Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Doherty;  
Aldermen Copeland, Lawlor, McCullough  
and Rodgers; and  
Councillors Abernethy, Anglin, Beattie, Bell,  
Black, Bower, Bradley, Brennan, R. Brooks,  
T. Brooks, Bunting, Canavan, Carson, Cobain,  
Collins, de Faoite, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly,  
R.M. Donnelly, Doran, D. Douglas, S. Douglas,  
Duffy, Ferguson, Garrett, Groogan, Hanvey,  
Long, Lyons, Magee, Maghie, McAteer, McCabe,  
McCallin, McCann, McCusker, McDonough-Brown,  
McDowell, McKay, McKeown, R. McLaughlin,  
Meenehan, Murphy, Murray, Nelson, Ó Néill,  
Smyth, Verner, Walsh and Whyte.

### **Summons**

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

### **Apologies**

An apology for inability to attend was reported on behalf of Alderman McCoubrey and Councillor I. McLaughlin.

### **Declarations of Interest**

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

### **Strategic Policy and Resources Committee**

Moved by Councillor Brennan,  
Seconded by Councillor Black,

“That the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 13th February, 2026, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.”

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**Revenue Estimates and District Rate 2026/27**

**Amendment 1**

Moved by Councillor Murray,  
Seconded by Councillor McAteer,

“That the above-mentioned decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 13th February, insofar as it related to the **Boucher Road Playing Fields**, be rejected and agrees to adhere to the decision taken by the Council, at its meeting on 9th February. Namely:

*The decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 23rd January, insofar as it related to the future Strategic Use of Boucher Road Playing Fields, be referred back to the Committee and that any final decisions regarding the future of the site would be reconsidered after the submission of detailed reports which would address the following:*

- 1. an assessment of how the Boucher Road site could be reconfigured to support enhanced sports provision alongside a major events venue with a capacity of up to 40,000;*
- 2. an evaluation of potential alternative sites across the city suitable for development as a major events space;*
- 3. a comprehensive analysis of the economic impact of Boucher Road operating as an events venue, including benefits to local businesses, tourism, and employment; and*
- 4. the Council works with promoters and partners such as Eventsec, MCD, and Shine, to look at options of creating a hybrid site which provides sporting facilities and large scale events with a capacity of 40k.*

*In addition, this Council reaffirmed its commitment to music, arts, and culture as central to Belfast’s future. The Council requested that also that an in-depth report outlining current support for the music industry, from grassroots and community-based venues such as the ‘Oh Yeah Music Centre’, through to initiatives that promote Belfast as a leading international city of music and culture.”*

On a vote, twenty-five Members voted in favour of the amendment, with twenty-nine voting against, and three no votes, and it was declared lost.

**Amendment 2**

Moved by Councillor Groogan,  
Seconded by Councillor McAteer,

“That the above-mentioned decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 13th February, insofar as it related to the **Pitches Strategy**, be amended to:

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This council is committed to bringing forward the new Pitches Strategy in March 2026 to address the current significant deficit in pitch provision across Belfast, improve existing facilities and increase usage of other pitches through better partnership working with other organisations in the city.

In light of the particular challenges around the provision of GAA pitches, this Council will agree to the provision of at least 3 new GAA pitches within this pitches strategy as a priority. This will include the use of Boucher Road Playing Fields.

The Council acknowledges the potential conflict with the site's existing use as the largest venue for major concerts and events in Belfast and recognises the importance of ensuring we maintain a site that is capable of hosting on a similar or indeed greater scale going forward, with appropriate supporting facilities and infrastructure. We commit to working with the large scale events sector, statutory partners and local stakeholders to identify and assess suitable alternative sites across the city or the potential for managing both within the Boucher Road Playing Fields. A report will be brought back on these options within two months to advance this issue.

This Council will also prioritise proposed soccer pitches that may be eligible for external funding processes as and when such application periods open."

During discussion, Councillor Murphy suggested the following addition to the proposal at the end of the second paragraph: ***'This will include the use of Boucher Road Playing Fields with Belfast City Council installing two GAA pitches, an intermediate soccer pitch and small sided games pitches at this facility.'***

During further discussion, Councillor Whyte suggested the removal of the term '***at least 3***' in the second paragraph.

The Proposer accepted the amendments.

The motion, as amended, therefore read:

"This council is committed to bringing forward the new Pitches Strategy in March 2026 to address the current significant deficit in pitch provision across Belfast, improve existing facilities and increase usage of other pitches through better partnership working with other organisations in the city.

In light of the particular challenges around the provision of GAA pitches, this Council will agree to the provision of new GAA pitches within this pitches strategy as a priority. This will include the use of Boucher Road Playing Fields with Belfast City Council installing two GAA pitches, an intermediate soccer pitch and small sided games pitches at this facility.

The Council acknowledges the potential conflict with the site's existing use as the largest venue for major concerts and events in Belfast and recognises the importance of ensuring we maintain a site that is capable of hosting on a similar or indeed greater scale going forward, with appropriate supporting facilities and

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infrastructure. We commit to working with the large scale events sector, statutory partners and local stakeholders to identify and assess suitable alternative sites across the city or the potential for managing both within the Boucher Road Playing Fields. A report will be brought back on these options within two months to advance this issue.

This Council will also prioritise proposed soccer pitches that may be eligible for external funding processes as and when such application periods open.”

On a vote, thirty-two Members voted in favour of the amendment, with twenty-four voting against, and it was declared carried.

**Amendment 3**

Moved by Councillor Bunting,  
Seconded by Councillor R. Brooks,

Resolved - “That the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 13th February, insofar as it related to the ***Pitches Strategy-DCMS Funding*** be amended to provide that, in relation to the expansion of East Belfast Pitch Provision, that the second football pitch provision be changed from the recommendation which had been outlined in the report of the Committee on 6<sup>th</sup> February under the heading Pitches Programme – Proposed Phasing and Implementation Plan to prioritise the Orangefield Playing Fields, Blanchflower Park Playing Fields and Aircraft Park in the first phase, rather Dixon Park.”

Arising from the previous decisions, at the request of Councillor Beattie, the Council also agreed to proceed with the remainder of the Pitches Strategy.

**Amendment 4**

Moved by Councillor Long,  
Seconded by Councillor Maghie,

“That the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 13th February, under the above-mentioned heading, be amended to provide there be a 4.25 per cent increase in the Revenue Estimates 2026/27 to include the removal of the previously agreed increase of £100,000 for the Summer Community Diversionary Programme as agreed at the meeting on 23rd January, and setting the growth fund at £3,653,887.00 – Any additional money from efficiency savings and revenue raising will be added to the Growth Fund, with a minimum target of £500,000 in year savings.”

On a vote, thirteen Members voted in favour of the amendment, with thirty-seven voting against, and four no votes, and it was declared lost.

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**Adoption of Minutes**

The Lord Mayor put the minutes of the Strategic Policy and Committee of the 13th February to the Council for adoption. As there was no consensus, the adoption of the minutes became subject to a vote.

On a recorded vote, forty-seven Members voted in favour of the adoption of the minutes and two against, with three no votes and, accordingly, the minutes of the Strategic Policy and Committee of the 13th February, subject to the aforementioned amendments, were thereupon approved and adopted.

<b>For 47</b>	<b>Against 2</b>	<b>No Vote 3</b>
<p>The Lord Mayor, Councillor Kelly (Chairperson); Aldermen Copeland, Lawlor, McCullough and Rodgers; and Councillors Abernethy, Anglin, Beattie, Bell, Black, Bower, Bradley, Brennan, R. Brooks, Bunting, Canavan, Carson, Cobain, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, R.M. Donnelly, Doran, D. Douglas, S. Douglas, Duffy, Ferguson, Garrett, Groogan, Hanvey, Long, Magee, Maghie, McAteer, McCabe, McCallin, McCann, McKay, McKeown, R. McLaughlin, Meenehan, Murphy, Murray, Nelson, Ó Néill, Smyth, Verner, Walsh.</p>	<p>Councillors Collins and McDowell,</p>	<p>The Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Doherty; and Councillors de Faoite and Lyons.</p>

Lord Mayor  
Chairperson